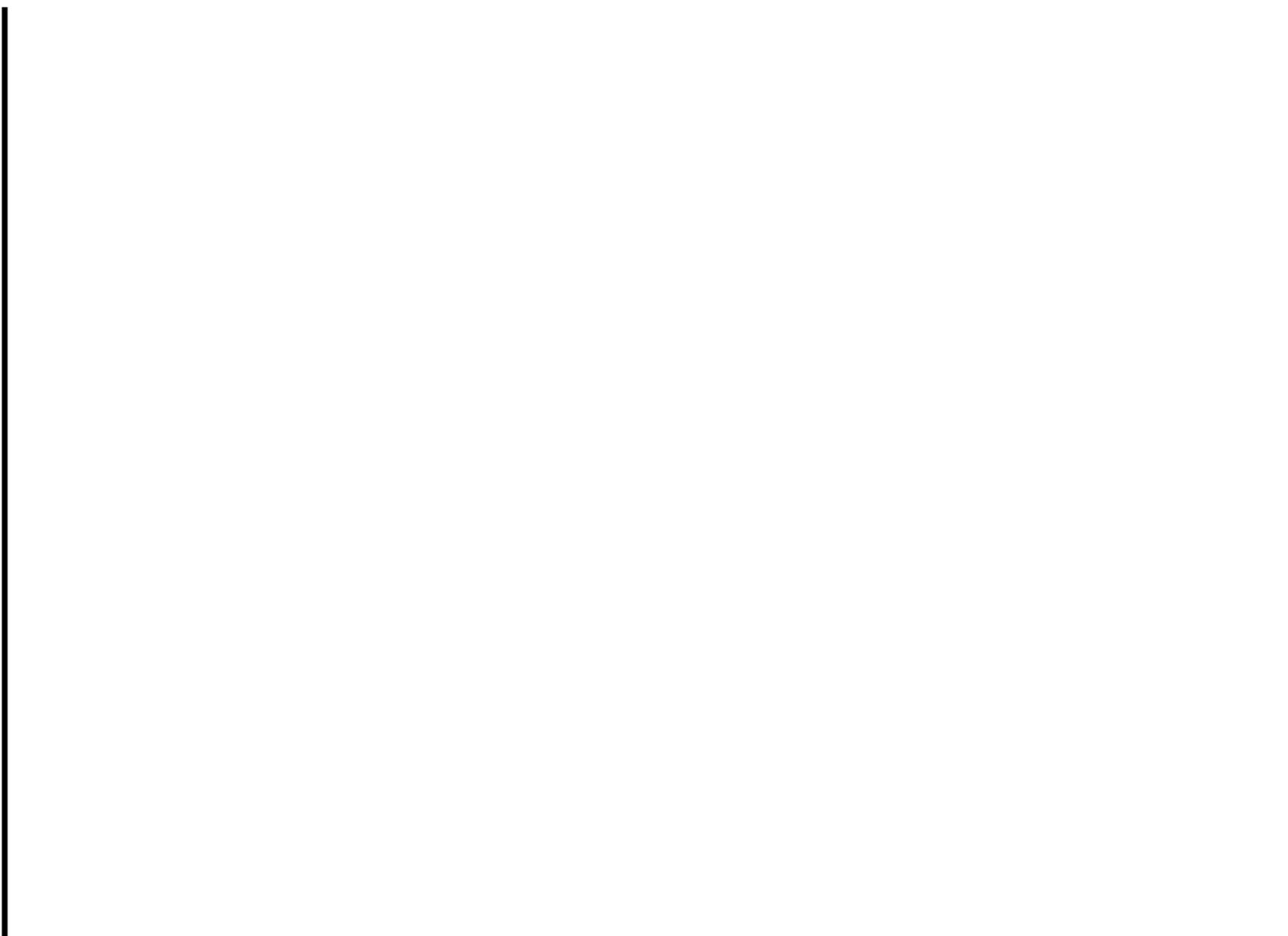


An Open Source License Idea

Zooko O'Whielacronx
zooko@zooko.com

This is part two. I'm giving this talk on behalf of my friend Zooko, who couldn't stay for this session. In a conversation yesterday, he mentioned an idea I thought was pretty neat, so I offered to present it for him.

Here it is.



societal
good

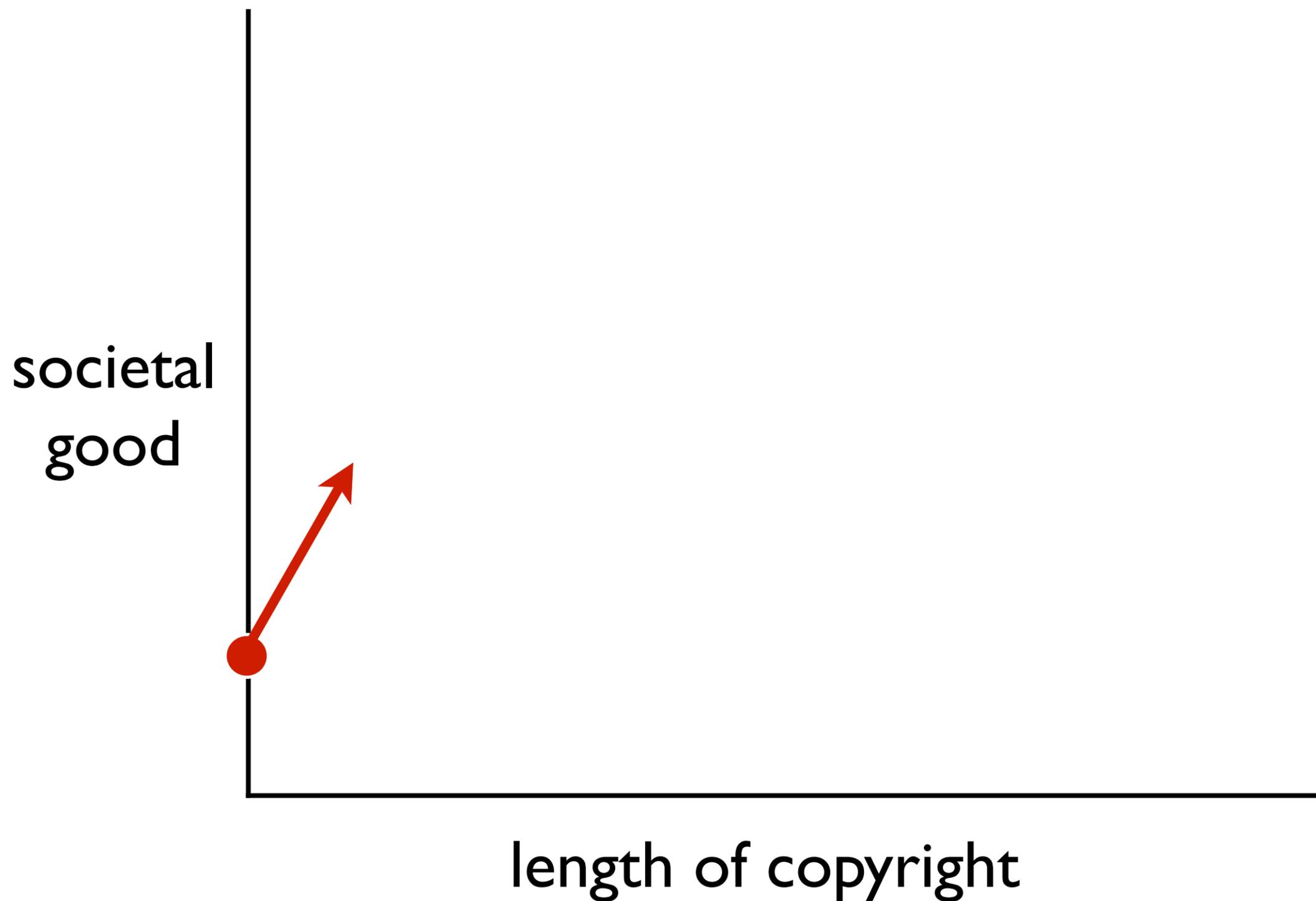
length of copyright

When the founders wrote Copyright into the Constitution, they intended it to “Promote the Progress of Science and Useful Arts”. If there was no such thing as copyright, it would be **harder to get rewarded** for the value of the works you create. With copyright there’s a **feedback loop**: the more value you create, the more income you can derive from it, and you can use that income to create more valuable work. But if **copyright lasts forever**, then the societal good would be severely reduced because it would prevent people from redistributing and creating derived works. So the founders picked a **compromise** — they decided copyright should last 14 years so that the creators of works could reap some benefits, but works would still eventually enter the public domain.

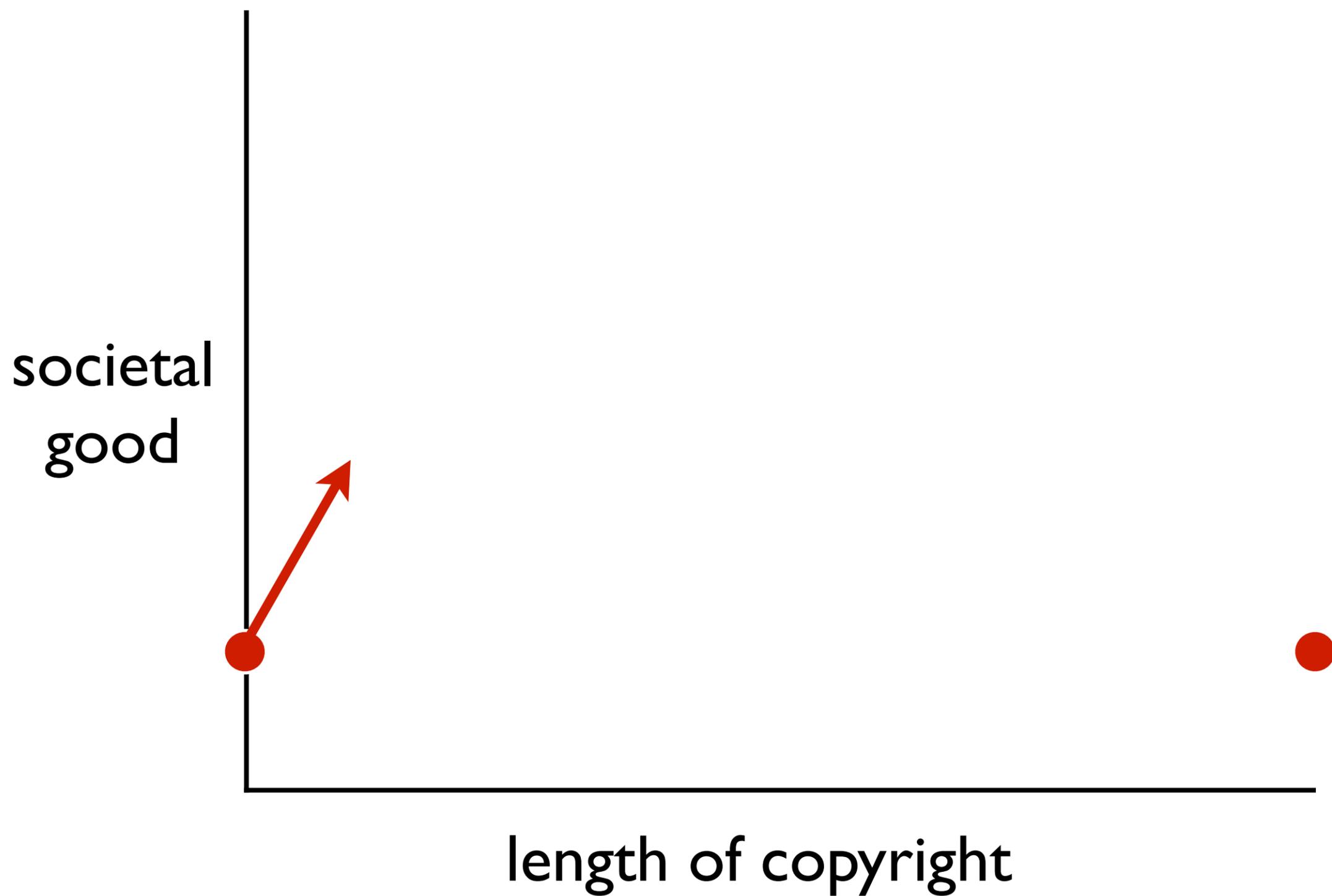
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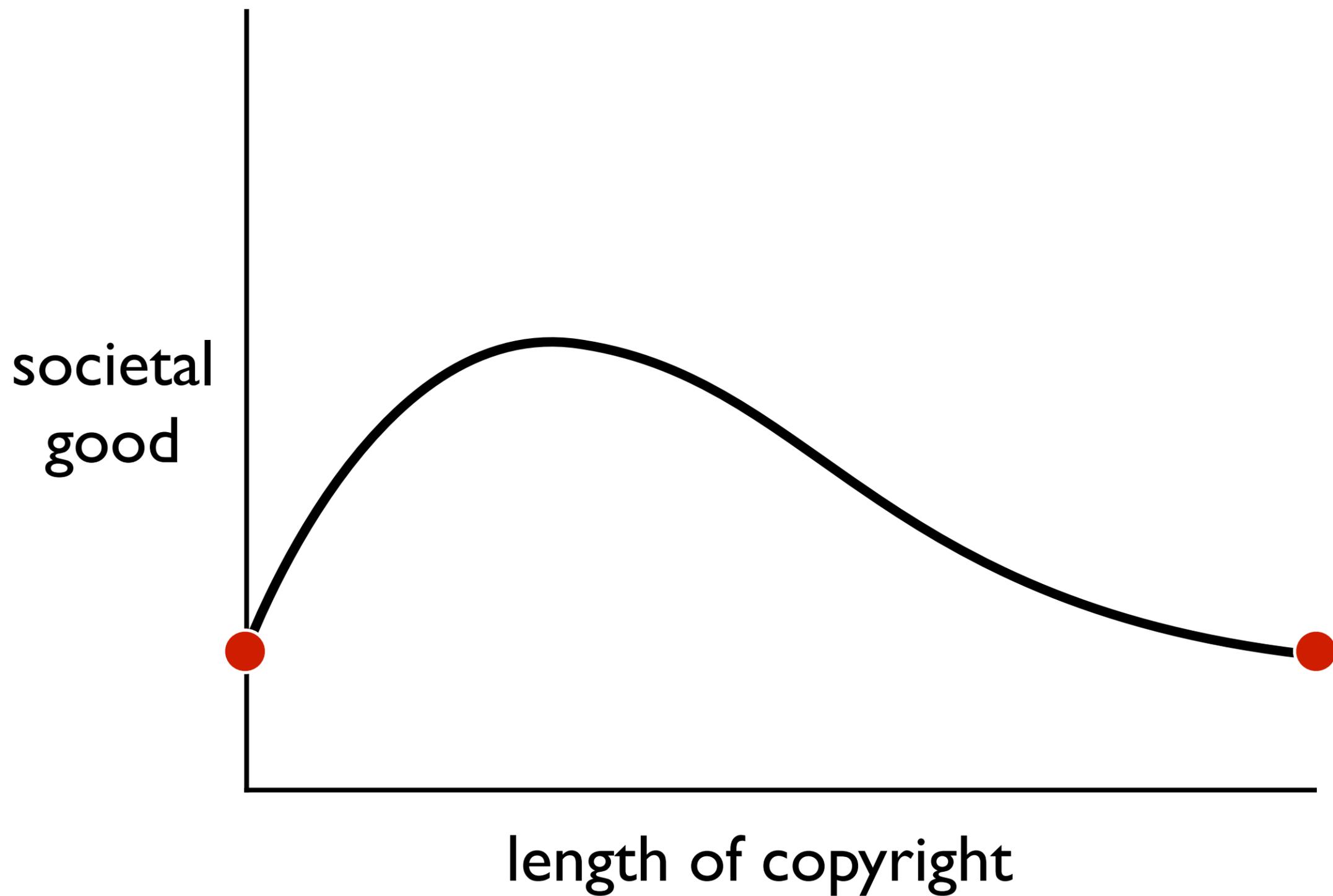
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GPL —

BSD —

Now let's compare two popular styles of open source licenses. The big difference between the GPL and the BSD license has to do with what you have to do if you change a software program and then distribute it. With the GPL, if you **ship a derived work**, you must then **immediately release** the source code of your derived work. With the BSD, if you **ship a derived work**, you are **never required** to release the source code.

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GPL — ship derived work,
immediately required to release source

BSD —

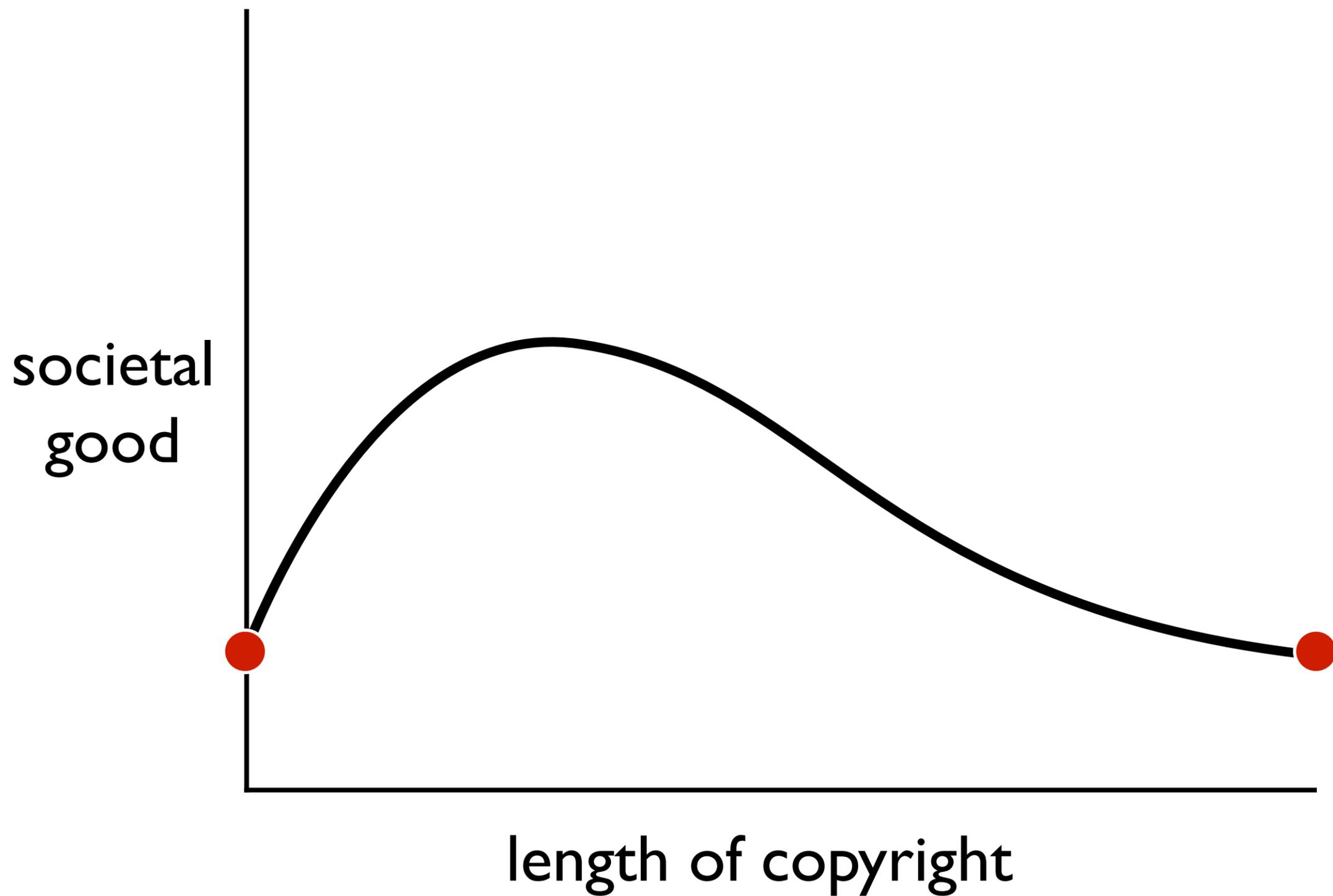
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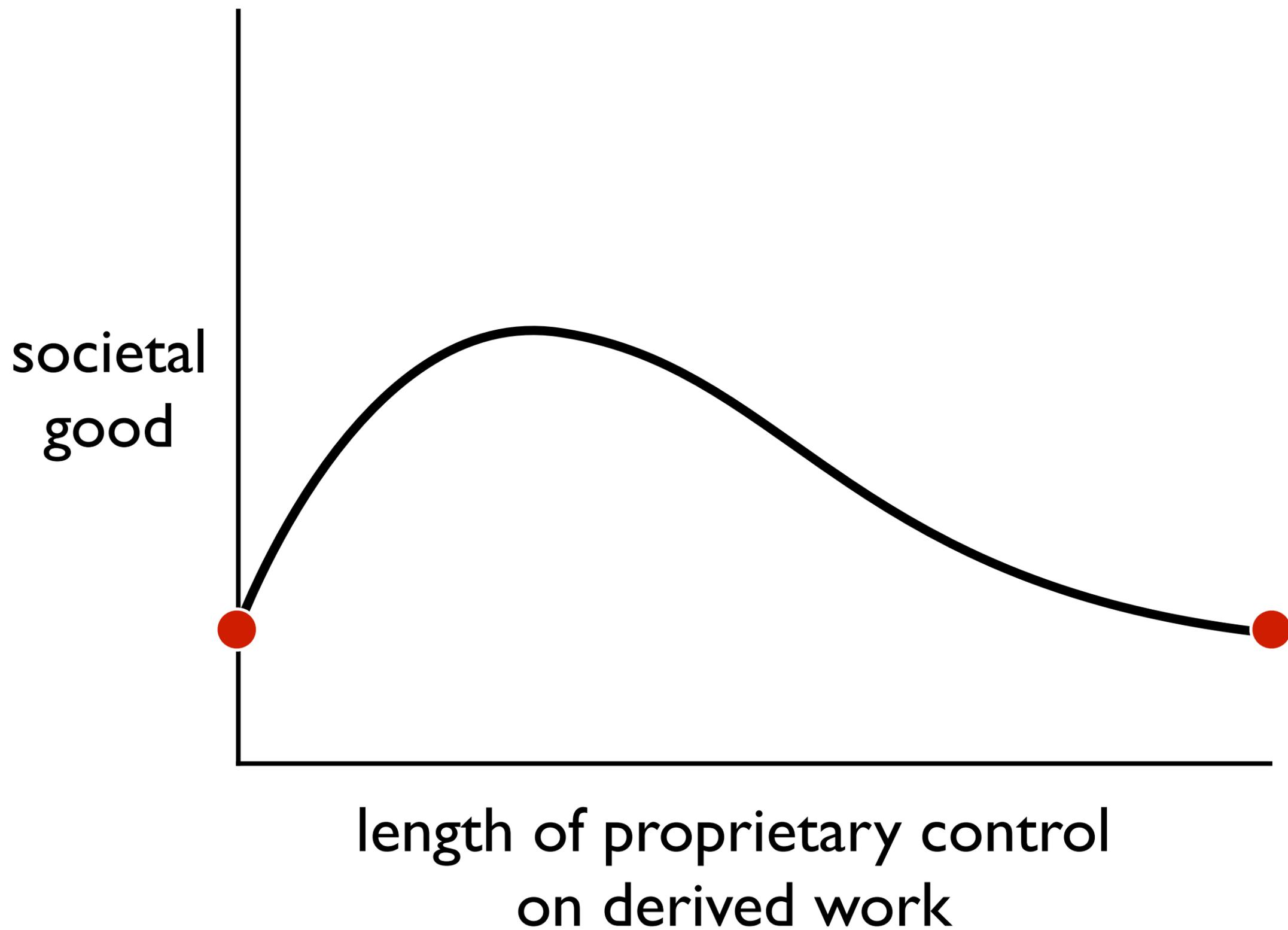
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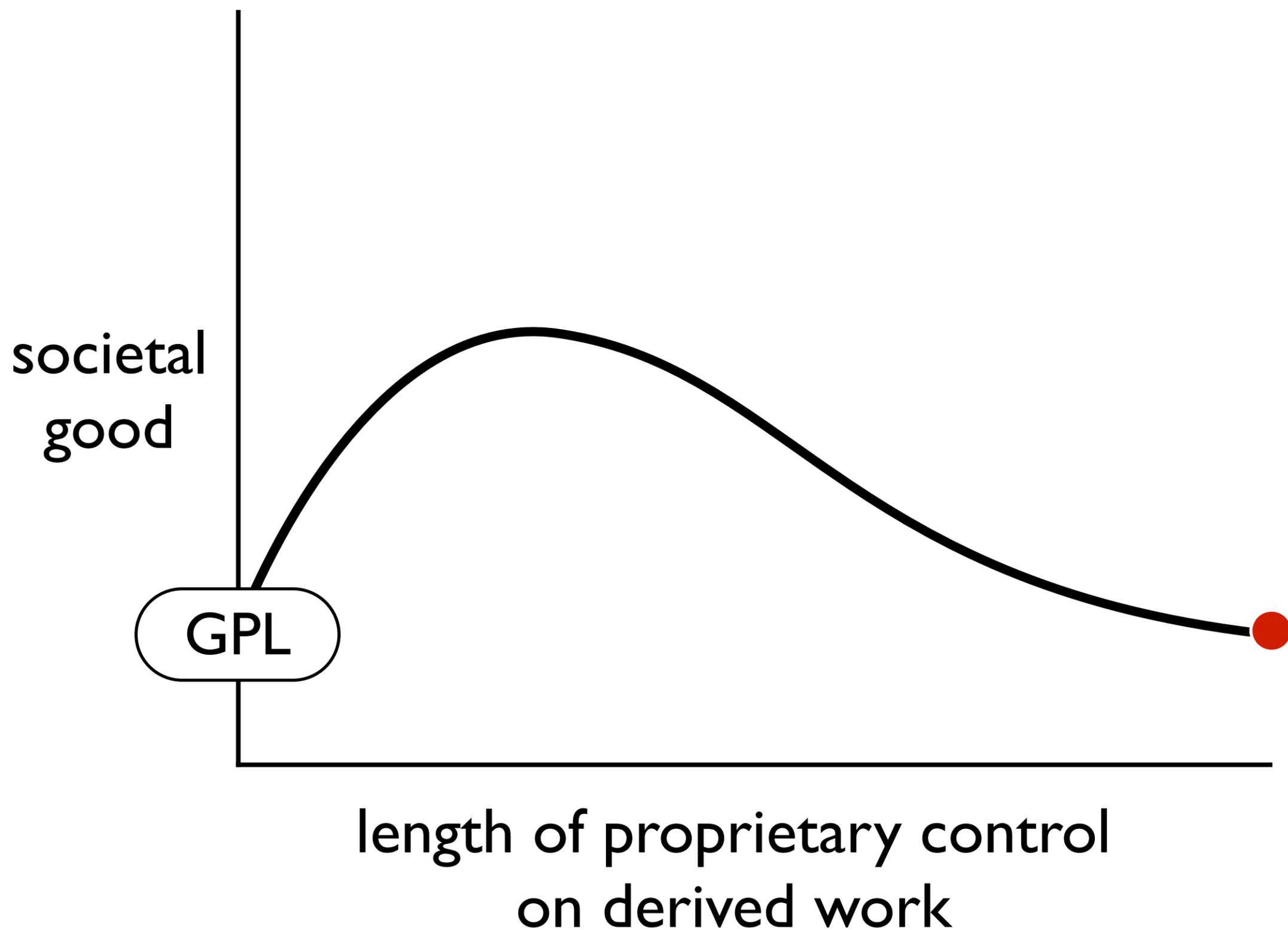
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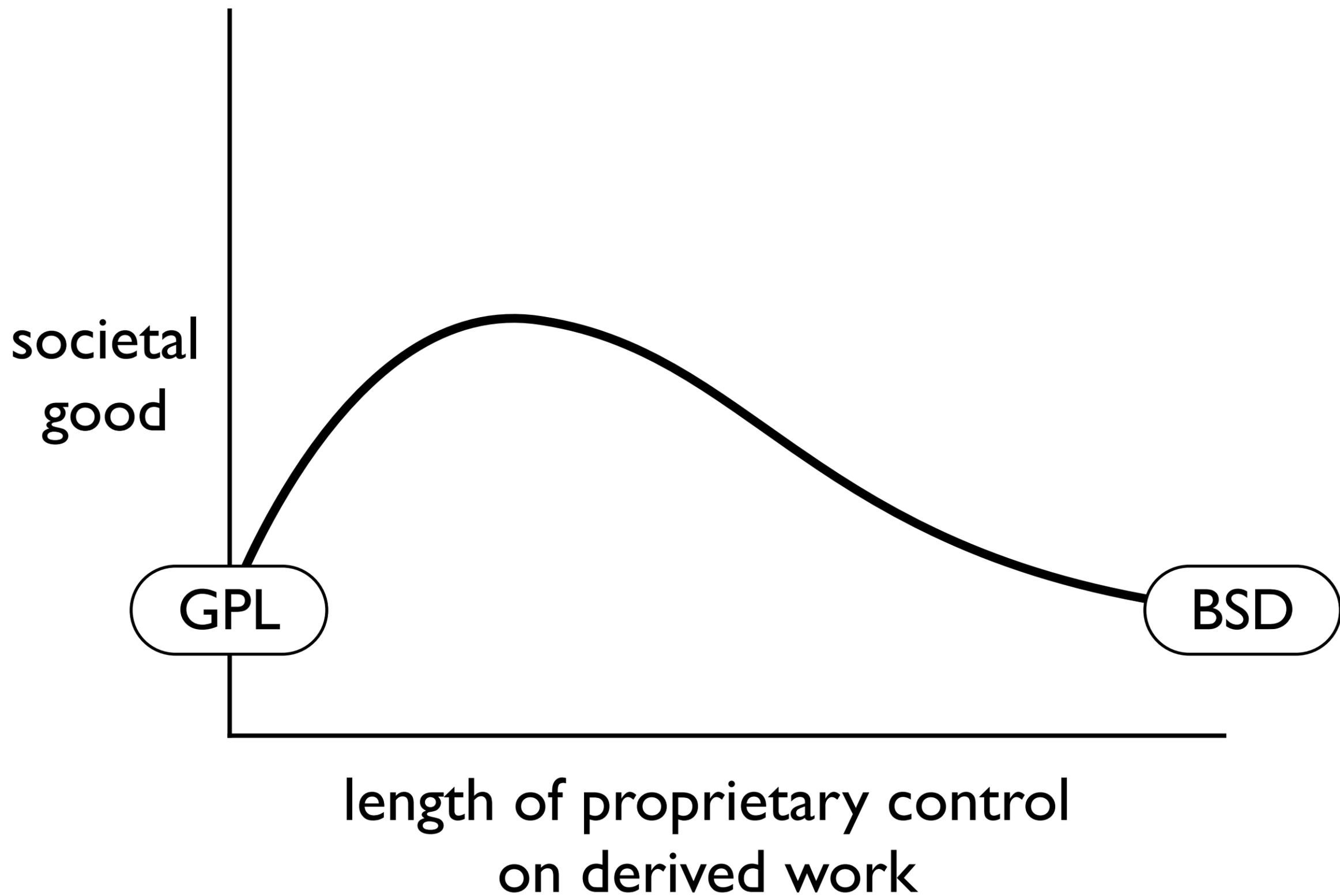
So, here's the neat idea. Just like the argument for the length of copyright, you can make the **same argument** for the length of proprietary control on derived work. With **GPL**, after you distribute a derived work, you have zero minutes of control. With **BSD**, you have an infinite length of control. How about a compromise in which you have some period of time — say a year or two — during which you can make money on a proprietary derived work, but the work still **eventually** has to be open source? This is the basic idea of the Transitive Grace Period Public License. Like the GPL, it's transitive, which means that when you distribute software to someone under the TGPPL, they also have to distribute it under TGPPL. But there's a grace period during which you can sell early access to your derived work. **Zooko is one of the Allmydata developers**, and as an experiment they've released Allmydata under this type of license, and also under the GPL. I'm not a lawyer; I just wanted to toss this idea out for you to think



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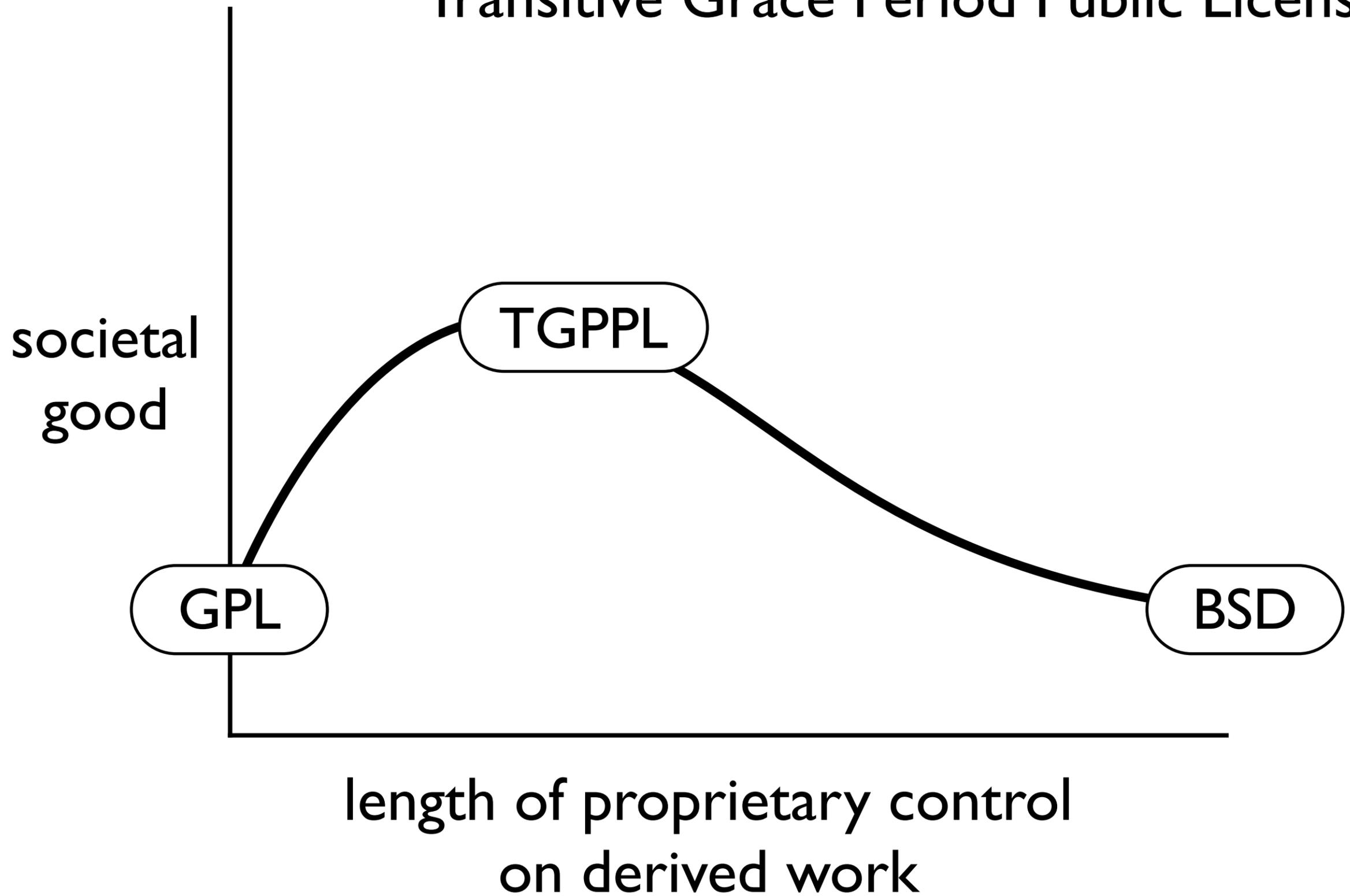


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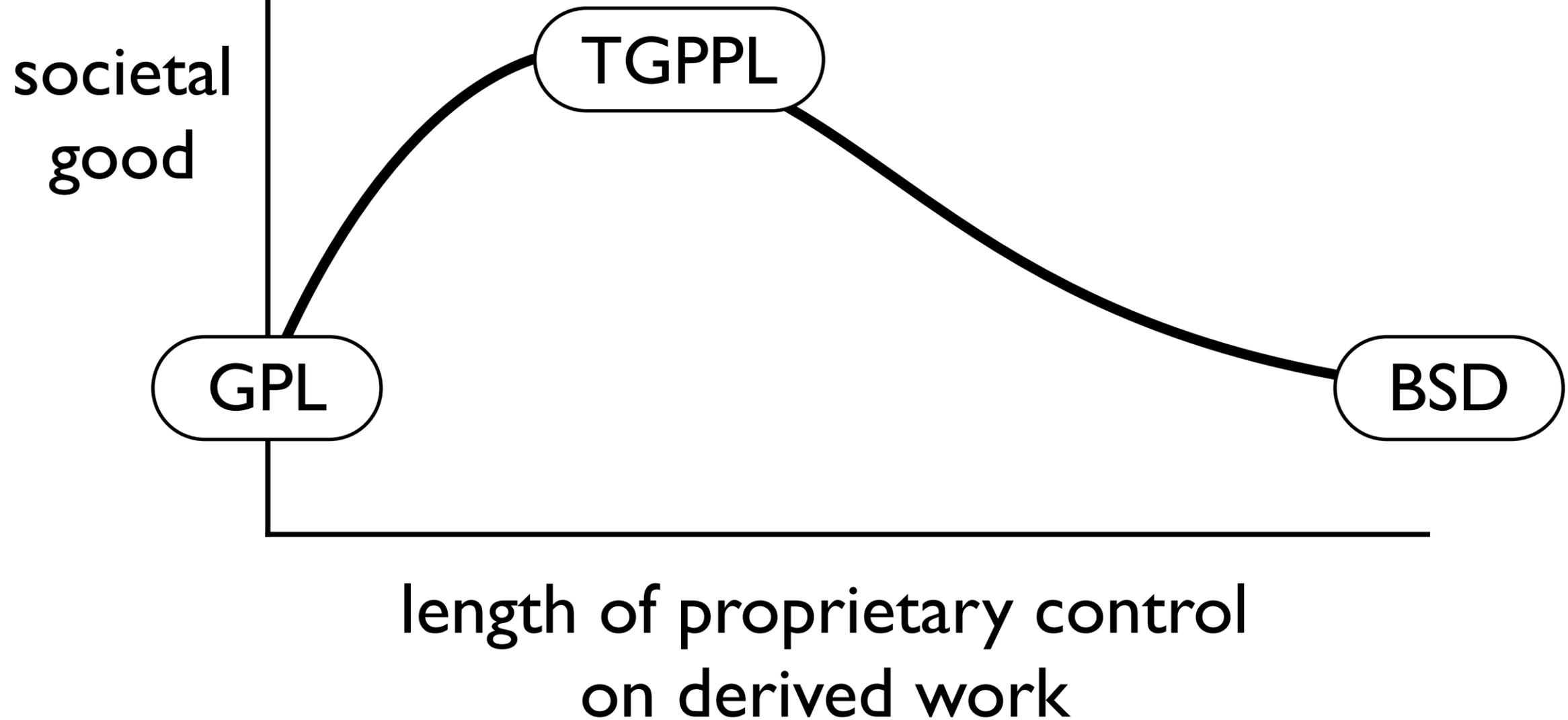


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<http://zooko.com/tgppl.html>

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